J. Villiers T-8 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1



MA 471 426 565 When a deep-sea dhow is built, at least some of the money is put up by the *nakhoda* himself and his family. It is the first essential of the *nakhoda* that he should be from a family of standing in the community, which will pay its debts. Just why such families cannot finance a dhow by themselves I was unable to discover, but the Arab, apparently, has no objection to carrying on business under a cumbersome structure of debt. The merchant, backed by the Sheikh or the ruling family, backs the *nakhoda's* family, who support in turn a trusted and experienced member to take command of the dhow.

MA 565 871 857 ● It is customary for the boys in such families to go to sea while very young, but they never work as sailors. They are always privileged: no sailor can become a deep-sea *nakhoda*, since obviously if his family is of standing, he would never serve before the mast. The children sail with him sometimes from the age of six or seven, though not regularly. They will make one or two long voyages, looking on and learning but not actually doing anything; then they will remain at home a year or two before going out again. They take command very young. Schooling, at least in 1939, was normally restricted to the local Koranic schools, and rarely occupied more than three months in the year. Only merchants' sons went to the colleges of Iraq, Egypt, and Syria.

MA 545 554 505 Gradually the head of a *nakhoda's* family may attain the status of a lesser merchant himself, though his merchandise is generally limited to the wherewithal to build ships, which comes up in his own dhows from the Malabar coast. But a *nakhoda* himself almost never becomes a merchant, and a merchant's son never becomes a *nakhoda*. Nevertheless, the profession of conducting deep-sea dhows about the waters of the Indian Ocean is a highly respected one, and the shipmasters of Kuwait are, on the whole, a very competent and knowledgeable class, though few of them can practice much astronomical navigation. Even their long voyages down to Zanzibar or to Calicut are coasting, really down with one monsoon, and back with the other, almost always in sight of land. Their real ability consists in their local knowledge, both of ports and trade.

MA [487]

K MA 505 545 In Kuwait, in 1939 — as now — there were upwards of 10,000 qualified deep-sea sailors. An astonishingly high proportion is of

3: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

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# MARINE INDUSTRIES OF EASTERN ARABIA

RICHARD LeBARON BOWEN, JR.

361 226 503 315 THE Persian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia is desolate in the extreme: in many places one travels along the beach for dozens of miles without seeing a living soul. But there is a sprinkling of old coastal towns, whose inhabitants for the most part gain their livelihood from the sea. Among them are Jubail, long a port of entry for the capital city of Riyadh, 235 miles inland; Dammam, seaport for the Qatif and Safwa oases (a deep-water pier has recently been constructed at Dammam); Al Khobar and Oqair, ports for the great oasis of Hofuf (Hasa). To these have been added of late years Arabian American Oil Company settlements at Ras al Mish'ab (a construction camp and port facilities), Nejma (a refinery and camp), and Ras Tanura (pipeline terminus and cargo wharf).

## Fishing

226 262 Foremost among the marine activities of the older coastal towns is fishing. Although there are far fewer species of fish in the Persian Gulf than in the Indian Ocean, they are present in greater numbers, particularly the porgies, than one might expect in so warm a body of salt water, and fish form a welcome addition to the diet in a land where food is pitifully scarce.

226 [357 504] Fishing methods range from a simple hand line to large and complicated fishweirs. On land the hand line is used mainly by small boys, who, like the small fry of any other country, enjoy fishing. Since there is an almost complete lack of jetties and piers, these young fishermen have to stand on the beach and heave their weighted lines as far as they can (Fig. 2). When the fish are running, these youngsters line the shores, and their catch is sometimes sizable. Hand lines are indispensable on every dhow and are thrown out as soon as the boat is in open water.

A more advanced type of fishing uses the throw net—a circular net about 16 feet in diameter made of quarter-inch-mesh netting. The periphery is weighted with small lead weights, then doubled back toward the center and tied at 12-inch intervals to form a continuous pocket some six inches deep. The fisherman walks in knee-deep water at low tide, holding his net —which he has folded and gathered with the perfection of a parachutist—

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3: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2



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FIG. 2—Arab boys fishing with hand lines. When the fish are running, small boys often line the shore by the dozen.

the Koran, but a particularly juicy delicacy from a fish's point of view. The Arabs dot the shallow water with these basket traps at points where feeding appears good; the edges of small coral reefs are favorite spots.

The Arab fisherman never marks his traps with floats as the American lobster fisherman does, because he fears they will be plundered; he must remember the location of each trap. Where he cannot see the bottom, he suspends a float several feet below low-tide level. To tend his traps, this Arab rows his small boat up and down at low tide until he spies his trap or float and hooks it with a pole; in shallow water he sometimes dives for the trap. I once watched a crew of three fishermen off Ras Tanura; they seemed to know the approximate location of each trap in the 30 feet of water, but they spent as much as a quarter of an hour peering into the water to find each submerged float. These men used the largest wire traps I saw in the Persian Gulf, and their catch at times was astounding.

The Arabs on the east coast of Arabia seldom use seines, though on Bahrein Island I saw several drying in the sun. However, large communal seines have apparently been used on the Batinah Coast of Oman; for Thomas[1] relates that "there, a hundred fishermen were hauling ashore a communally owned net, the vast extent of which was marked by distant bobbing floats . . . . In contrast, a lone fisherman, far out, monotonously cast his circular hand-net." On the Hadhramaut coast of South Arabia the fishermen also use large seines. At Mukalla I saw a two-and-a-half-inch-mesh net 190 feet long and 20 feet wide; a narrower net had a mesh of five inches. These wide-mesh nets are used for sharks. Farther east on this coast, at Jazir Bay, the fishermen set their seines by swimming out to sea on inflated sheepskins!

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[1] Bertram Thomas: Alarms and Excursions in Arabia, London, 1931, p. 156.